

CALLIOPE HOUSING PROJECT, BUILDING NO. 2
(B.W. Cooper Housing Project)
1101-27 South Dorgenois Street
New Orleans
Orleans Parish
Louisiana

HABS LA-1368-A
HABS LA-1368-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

DUE TO INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION AT THE
TIME OF EDITING, THIS MATERIAL MAY NOT
CONFORM TO HABS OR HAER STANDARDS.

B.W. COOPER HOUSING PROJECT, BUILDING No. 2
(Calliope Housing Project)

HABS No. LA-1368-~~D~~A

Location: 1101-27 South Dorgenois Street, New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana

Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates:
29.953916669561906°, -90.09507358074188°

USGS New Orleans East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM)
coordinates: 15.780363.3317230

Date of Erection: ~~1939~~ 1941

Architects: Sol Rosenthal, Jack J.H. Kessel, and Ernest W. Jones

Owners: Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), the City of New Orleans

Significance: The Great Depression of the 1930s spurred the first peacetime federal government attempts to systematically address the lack of adequate affordable housing for low-income residents. The federal government financed local building efforts through a series of new laws. Among the third wave of these projects planned and built in the late 1930s, the construction of the B.W. Cooper Housing Project addressed two major issues of the era: the housing reform movement (i.e. – urban “slum clearance”) and the reemployment of large sections of the labor force. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the closing and demolition of the housing projects along with the destruction of eighty percent of New Orleans housing stock once again focused national and international attention on housing rights.

History: Please see ^{field notes for} ~~historic report~~ HABS No. LA-1368 for the general history of the B.W. Cooper Housing Project.

Description: The architects of Building No. 2 of the B.W. Cooper Housing Project designed the building to echo the brick townhouses of the Vieux Carré. Yet it was a modern multi-unit apartment designed to allow the lowest income residents in New Orleans a safe and sanitary place to live.

2005
Even after many storms and two major hurricanes (Hurricane Betsy in 1965 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005), the brick, concrete and terra cotta “tile” walls had no structural failure. Only surfaces, plumbing, and electrical systems needed repair or replacement. The original site plan labeled Building No. 2 as type “D”, not be confused with HABS No. ~~1369-D~~.

LA-1368-D
1. United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. “B.W. Cooper Housing Development, Environmental Justice Study.” (New Orleans, LA, 2007), 9.

The building stood 141 feet long, 27 feet deep and 48 feet tall at the ridgeline. The first floor contained six one-bedroom apartments. The second floor had eight two-story apartments: four two-bedroom and four three-bedroom apartments.

The walls sat on concrete footings with an approximately three foot high knee-wall forming a vented crawlspace. Terra cotta "tile" masonry supported the twelve-inch thick walls with a brick exterior veneer. The floors were six-inch thick concrete slabs. The only wood could be found in the roof: trussed rafters spaced 23 ½ inches on center.

The concrete front porches extended six feet out from the façade, with side steps. Cypress beam balconies shaded each front porch. The balconies were supported by steel beams and surrounded with a railing with decorative ironwork that echoed the ironwork balconies and galleries of the French Quarter. Back stoops were only three feet deep and uncovered. Five chimneys were evenly spaced down the length of the building.

Exterior doors were simple affairs with six-light over panel front doors with no brick detailing. An important point of comfort: all doors had a secondary wood screen door for summer ventilation (while protecting the people from insects).

Windows had several different types specified. Most would be eight over eight pane wood double-hung windows. Some would be a six over six pane wood double-hung window. (A New Orleans standard window.) However, two six over six pane windows would be paired into a set or the bathroom window would be noticeable for its four over four double-hung window,

Originally, the contractor installed terra cotta tiles on the gable-ended roof. Hot air vented out of the attic with triangular roof vents. Wood molding covered the eaves and traditional half-round gutters with downspouts carried rainwater off the roof. Now, the terra cotta tile roofs had been replaced with a 30-year asphalt shingle.

The architects arranged the rooms of each unit around the front and/or rear stairs. The front stairs ran straight back from the front door. The rear stairs ran between floors in "U" shape, creating extra egress. Stair banisters were constructed of metal: a square newel post and plain pickets.

The architects used traditional residential finishes: floors with wood (later tile), plaster surfacing over the terra cotta walls and concrete ceiling. All wall had a simple, but well crafted wood baseboard. All interior doors were two-panel doors with a plain surround that matched the baseboards. The fireplaces were simply but attractively decorated with a brick surround with wood molding, a wood mantle top with a beveled edge, and three metal heat grates. Later, space heaters (probably natural gas) would be vented out of the chimney.

Historians: Virginia S. Lee
Preservation Architect, M. Arch.
Earth Search, Inc.
P.O. Box 770336
New Orleans, LA 70177-0336